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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 21 June 2004, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aisi ..... (Papua New Guinea)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/AC.109/2004/L.12)

2. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/64), the report presented by the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system on the activities that they developed in implementing the Declaration (E/2004), and draft resolution A/AC.109/2004/L.12.

Hearing of a representative of a non-self-governing territory

3. **The Chairman**, with the Committee's agreement, gave the floor to Mr. Corbin, who spoke on behalf of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands.

4. **Mr. Corbin** (Minister of State of the United States Virgin Islands) said that his Government continued to consider action undertaken in coordination with the specialized agencies as one of the Special Committee's most important outputs.

5. Every year the Special Committee considered the agenda item without hardly any discussion and, on the last day of session, adopted almost exactly the same text. The text was then voted upon by the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with a significant number of developed countries abstaining. Based on an examination of explanations of position provided after the voting, there was hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus, and efforts should be made to that end. A number of abstaining countries were donor countries that provided assistance in the framework of regional development programmes, and the adoption of the draft by consensus would make the participation of the Territories in such programmes more likely.

6. The speaker welcomed the fact that in the current year the draft resolution included for the first time a reference to the positive role played by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in providing assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The role of regional commissions was critical to assistance aimed at the regional integration of such territories and to their closer linkage with the United Nations system. In that connection, he noted that in April 2004 his own Territory had been elected to chair one of ECLAC's most important subsidiary bodies, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC), and urged the Special Committee to make its work more effective by developing official relations with ECLAC and ESCAP, especially in the area of information on economic and social development and in relation to management issues.

7. One of the most interesting aspects of the work of the regional commissions was the participation of Territories in various United Nations conferences and other international meetings. Such participation helped the Territories to manage their own economic, social and political development. ECLAC would soon make public the conclusions of a review of legislative mandates in the Territories located in Latin America and the Caribbean and the level and scale of participation of those Territories in world conferences organized by the United Nations. The speaker would make those findings available to the members of the Committee.

8. The draft resolution on the specialized agencies made reference to the significant role played by other United Nations bodies, and in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which continued to be crucial to the coordination of assistance provided to the Territories by the United Nations system. The speaker was pleased that, in the omnibus resolution already adopted at the current session, the Special Committee had retained language requesting UNDP to provide for the participation of the United States Virgin Islands in its regional programmes. The Special Committee could provide the United States Virgin Islands with direct support in that matter by encouraging the competent units of the Secretariat to communicate with UNDP with regard to the implementation of that request.

9. The speaker, however, was puzzled by the deletion, from the omnibus resolution, of the request for participation of the United States Virgin Islands in the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) programme on

archival and document management. Participation of his Territory in that programme would permit to significantly strengthen ongoing bilateral cooperation with Denmark, which in 1999 had begun to work with the United States Virgin Islands on the preservation and repatriation of archives and works of art exported to Denmark in the wake of Danish colonial rule. The Special Committee could assist by requesting the competent units of the Secretariat to communicate with UNESCO regarding that matter and inserting an appropriate reference in the omnibus resolution of the Fourth Committee.

10. Matters addressed in United Nations budgetary committees had significant bearing on the process of decolonization of territories. The budget of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) for the 2004-2005 biennium, for instance, included an activity concerning assistance provided by the specialized agencies and the institutions associated with the United Nations to the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Evidently, however, DPA provided no coordination in that area. Such activities were coordinated by UNDP and by ECOSOC bodies, such as regional commissions. In many cases, the Territories were obliged to ensure themselves the follow-up of measures taken. It was puzzling that such activities were listed each year as part of DPA's mandate. That description was inaccurate and gave a distorted picture of the distribution of responsibilities.

Adoption of the draft resolution

11. **The Chairman** said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolution A/AC.109/2004/L.12 without a vote.

12. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2004/L.12 was adopted without a vote.*

13. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus and wished that the text would also be adopted by consensus by the Fourth Committee and by the General Assembly in plenary.

14. Nevertheless, some objectives had not been attained. There needed to be a dialogue with the delegations of the countries that had expressed reservations concerning the draft adopted by consensus, in order to ensure that the reservations were withdrawn. Moreover, that dialogue should be based on the admission by those countries of the principle that specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations must participate in cooperation for the implementation of the Declaration. Initiatives undertaken by other parties could be useful in that regard.

15. **The Chairman** announced that the Special Committee had completed the consideration of the agenda item.

Draft report on the work of the Pacific Regional Seminar (A/AC.109/2004/CRP.1)

16. **The Chairman** drew attention to the draft report on the work of the Pacific Regional Seminar, contained in document A/AC.109/2004/CRP.1.

17. **Mr. Ovia** (Papua New Guinea) pointed out that some names in the report had been misspelled and should be corrected.

18. **The Chairman** said that the report would in its final form include the statement of the Rapporteur. He proposed to the Special Committee to approve the report of the Pacific Ocean Regional Seminar and include it in the report of the Special Committee to the General Assembly as an annex.

19. *The draft report was approved.*

20. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) welcomed the fact that the report on the work of the seminar held in Papua New Guinea addressed all of the matters that had been of interest to the participants.

21. **The Chairman** announced that the Special Committee had completed the consideration of the agenda item.

Other matters

22. **Mr. Ovia** (Papua New Guinea) expressed hope that the seminar scheduled to take place in 2005 could be held in Bermuda or another Non-Self-Governing Territory in the Caribbean. Such evidence of the effectiveness of the work of the Special Committee on Decolonization would be appropriate in view of the approaching midpoint of the Decade.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.